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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SERBIA WEEKLY UPDATE (4/2 - 4/5)

¶1. (U) This cable summarizes notable events relating to Serbia and Kosovo.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: For the week of April 2, the UNSC meeting attended by Prime Minister Kostunica was the dominant event related to Kosovo and Serbia. Both before and after the April 3 session, Belgrade media speculated on the level of support for a UNSC resolution based on the Ahtisaari plan, as well as whether there will be a UNSC delegation to Kosovo as requested by Russia. Also, the outgoing Foreign Minister requested a meeting with the Ambassador to lodge again his strong views against Kosovo independence. End Summary.

UNSC: THE VIEW FROM BELGRADE

¶3. (U) PM Kostunica traveled to New York to represent Serbia at the April 3 UNSC meeting on Kosovo. Before leaving, he said he was confident that Russia's support in the UNSC "ensures that Serbia will keep its territorial integrity and sovereignty," and that Ahtisaari's proposal will "collapse." In an interview with Russian TV, President Tadic reiterated that Serbia cannot accept "full, supervised, conditional or any kind of independence."

¶4. (U) Reports from the UNSC session dominated Serbian media on April 4. PM Kostunica's address from New York in which he expressed his optimism that Ahtisaari's plan will fail was repeated all day on RTS. Vecernje Novosti's headline read "Independence is losing its chance," and pro-Radical Glas Javnosti wrote "Putin won the first battle for Kosovo." PM advisor Aleksandar Simic told B92 that Ahtisaari's plan has the support of only a few UNSC members, and that it is a good sign that Kosovo President Sejdiu was not allowed to speak at the formal session. Presidential advisor Vuk Jeremic told BETA wire service that a lack of support for Ahtisaari's proposal is an encouraging signal and that it is obvious that the discussion in the UNSC "will be more complex than some expected a few months or weeks ago."

¶5. (U) The only criticism of the PM's performance came from rightist tabloid Kurir which, under its front page headline "Voja [Kostunica] running ahead of himself," writes that political analysts and some Kosovo Serb officials believe PM Kostunica's assessment that the UNSC has already rejected Ahtisaari's plan is unfounded, and simple self promotion. Kurir quoted Rada Trajkovic, vice-president of the Serbian National Council from Kosovo, who criticized PM Kostunica for traveling to New York with the motto "I am going to beat Ahtisaari" instead of "I am going there to preserve Kosovo."

¶6. (U) In a statement to TANJUG wire service, Ambassador Polt asserted that actually the UNSC session was another step toward a settlement of Kosovo's status and that he did not believe the UNSC would reject Ahtisaari's plan. "The UN plan proposed by President Ahtisaari has already been endorsed by the UN Secretary-General, the

U.S. and the EU. It is the best possible solution for the future of the people of Kosovo and for the future of Southeast Europe," the statement said. Russian Ambassador Alekseev told TANJUG that the UNSC session was very useful, but that Russia believes that Ahtisaari's proposal is unilateral and unacceptable. Alekseev said that at the UNSC session, Russia confirmed its stand that it is necessary to resume talks without an artificial deadline.

¶17. (U) Ivan Vejvoda, Director of The Balkan Trust for Democracy and possible DS candidate for FM, warned this week that the Serbia should not rely solely on hope for a Russian veto. While the threat of a veto might be useful for Serbia, a strategy based on a veto could limit Serbia's ability to find a compromise solution, according to Vejvoda.

UNSC MISSION TO KOSOVO?

¶18. (U) Ambassador Alekseev also told TANJUG that it is "of principal importance to have a UNSC mission visit Pristina and Belgrade in order to get acquainted with the situation in the field." President Tadic said on April 4 that he supports the Russian proposal and added that Serbian officials have been on a constant diplomatic offensive since the beginning of the Kosovo status negotiations.

¶19. (U) RTS reported on April 5 that DAS Rosemary DiCarlo said that Washington supports the Russian effort to send a UNSC mission to Kosovo. Electronic media reported that State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack called the mission "important to Russians and is now being seriously discussed."

FM: EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION "IN GRAVE DANGER"

¶110. (SBU) In a meeting he requested with the Ambassador on April 3, BELGRADE 00000459 002 OF 002

outgoing FM Vuk Draskovic warned again that Kosovo independence will put Serbia's integration into the EU and NATO "in grave danger." He criticized the international community for allowing the NATO bombing campaign to end the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo but doing nothing to stop the "second humanitarian disaster on the Serbs" in Kosovo. The Ambassador not only disagreed in general, but stressed that it was Milosevic who brought NATO to Kosovo and that KFOR was in Kosovo now to protect Serbs. Draskovic again offered his "one country, two systems" plan (which he claims has PM Kostunica's support), and hoped that Washington and other Contact Group countries would consider it. The Ambassador regretfully assured him that it had no chance.

OTHER ACTIVITY

¶111. (SBU) EUPT: The EU Planning Team for Kosovo, led by Casper Klynge, called on the Ambassador on April 3. Klynge said this was the team's second visit to Belgrade and that they had been well received both times. The team was scheduled to meet with Tadic advisor Damjan Krnjевич-Miskovic and Kostunica advisor Aleksandar Simic. (Note: Kostunica advisor Vladeta Jankovic met with the team last time but was in the US this week. End note.) Klynge said the team came to be "in partnership" with the GOS and to provide an update on their work. Klynge said that the EUPT's dialogue has been "pragmatic" with the GOS despite the "hot time." The team, he explained, was also in contact with police and judicial authorities in Serbia but said the former was proving much more productive than the latter. The Ambassador urged the team to open an office in Belgrade, which Klynge said will happen if the GOS agrees. In sum, Klynge said, EU unity never more critical for the team's work, but that the EU is more united now on Kosovo than it ever has been.

¶112. (U) The Church: Belgrade wires quoted Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) Archbishop Amfilohije statement calling on Russia and China to veto to prevent Kosovo independence. In his Easter message, SPC Patriarch Pavle spoke out against Kosovo independence and

emphasizing the region's importance in Serbian "history, culture and statehood."

¶13. (U) Protest: About 200 people protested against Kosovo independence in front of the Serbian Parliament in Belgrade on April 13. The speakers called on Russia and China to veto any resolution granting independence.

¶14. (U) UK: British Ambassador to Serbia Stephen Wordsworth told reporters on April 3 in Kraljevo that there is "nothing to gain in postponing" a Kosovo settlement.

¶15. (U) Croatia & Bulgaria: Serbian media reported that Bulgarian and Croatian PMs Stanishev and Sanader support Ahtisaari's proposal, calling it the "best" available option considering the positions of the parties.

¶16. (SBU) Presevo Valley: Newly elected MP Riza Halimi made comments indicating the possibility of Presevo Valley Albanians wanting to unite with Kosovo if Kosovo is partitioned, or if "rights of Albanians within Serbian institutions" are not fully implemented.

We have conveyed to Halimi that these are unhelpful comments and not in line with Contact Group principles. We understand our British counterparts have conveyed a similar message.

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